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AUTHOR Haehn, James O.
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ABSTRACT

This document presents the results of a survey of full-time faculty members at 4 California State Colleges. The survey was designed to discover the level of militancy within the faculty and to single out some other characteristics common to more militant professors. Highlights of the findings include: (1) Militant faculty are more likely to be in the disciplines associated with the Humanities and Social Sciences than in any of the other fields. (2) Militant professors are more likely to be those who view themselves as politically liberal or radical. (3) Although militant faculty members do not differ significantly from other professors in their educational perspectives, they do have a tendency to be more research than teaching oriented. (4) The militant instructors tend to function socially within more narrow circles than do nonmilitant professors, and this appears both in their contacts with faculty and students. (5) Militant faculty are less satisfied with their careers, with their institutions, and with the general character of college teaching. (6) The highly militant professors tend to be persons who have been in college teaching long enough to reach intermediate rank, and are not as likely to be among the older or younger groups of professors. (Author/HS)

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PROFESSORS, MILITANCE, AND PROFESSIONALISM

James O. Haehn

Associate Professor of Sociology

Chico State College

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PROFESSORS, MILITANCE, AND PROFESSIONALISM

One of the most interesting and potentially important developments in American higher education during the past few years has been given virtually no attention by sociologists, and until recently very little by persons in other disciplines as well. This development has been the movement by college and university faculty members toward occupational militancy, and related to that movement their growing support for unionization and collective bargaining.

Similar movements which have taken place in other professional occupations have been under study for some time. There is a literature to which one can turn in seeking to understand efforts toward collective action on the part of engineers, nurses, industrial scientists, and public school teachers.[1] To date, however, almost all of the research on militancy within American higher education has been concerned with student unrest, and only a small number of empirical studies have been focused upon the occupational militancy of faculty.

One reason for the absence of much empirical work on professorial unionism and militancy is probably the fact that these phenomena have so far taken hold on only a relatively few campuses across the country. Recent data indicates, for example, that collective bargaining has been established at only 37 universities and colleges in the United States. Yet, included in that total of 37 are the City University of New York, the State University of New York, the New Jersey State College system, the Nebraska State Colleges, and Central Michigan University.

The significance of these early gains in the movement for professional organization and militancy has been such that the few close observers of the movement are in agreement that within the next few years faculty will become increasingly militant. In addition, they are also in agreement that collective bargaining will become much more widespread for university and college teachers. Finally, there can be little doubt that should these predictions prove accurate

the institutional and pedagogical effects within American higher education will be far reaching.

Interestingly, the few empirical studies that have been done on faculty militancy, support for collective bargaining, and support for unionism have all been conducted within the California State College system. The California State Colleges do not have collective bargaining contracts with faculty, but the system has been the site of the longest campaign by militant professors to organize college teachers and to win bargaining rights. The dramatic and widely publicized faculty strike at San Francisco State College was but one illustration of this militancy on the part of state college instructors.

Although the conditions of higher education in California probably differ by degree from those in other states it is unlikely that the differences would be so great as to render data secured in California as inapplicable to what is or will take place elsewhere. Similarly, state college faculty are probably different in various ways from college professors in private institutions and from those teaching in universities, but again such differences are undoubtably of degree and not of kind. Thus, the data which will be examined in the remainder of this paper, while based upon a unique population, should have an applicability for faculty generally.

Several surveys whose main concern has been faculty unionism and militancy have been done among California State College faculty over the past few years.[2] The data reported here was from one of those surveys conducted by me during the Spring of 1968.

The sample selected for the study was restricted to full-time faculty at four northern California state colleges. Of that population a questionnaire was mailed to fifty percent of the teachers at each of the institutions - a total of 1,106 persons. Of those included in the survey 527 persons replied, but of these responses 30 proved unuseable for various reasons. Thus the effective response was 497, yielding a response rate of 44.9 percent.

The questionnaire was designed to explore a range of questions dealing with faculty support for unionism and the extent of occupational militancy among professors. In earlier papers I have attempted to analyze the variables associated with faculty support for or opposition to collective bargaining and unionization, and in this discussion the focus shall be upon militancy alone.[3]

Militancy was gauged by means of a scale, which in turn was based upon five of the questions in the questionnaire. The questions dealt with the degree of support or opposition of the respondents to: 1) striking for a job-related reason; 2) striking on an issue of academic freedom; 3) demonstrating in the state capitol to call attention to faculty problems; 4) demonstrating in the community where the college is located to call attention to faculty problems; and 5) a statement that greater militancy is necessary to solve the problems of the profession. Responses were weighted by the specific reply given to each of the items and each respondent was then assigned a score derived from the total of these weighted answers. The resulting scores were combined to produce three categories for analysis: highly militant, militant, and non-militant. Of the 497 respondents, 72 (14.5%) were classified as highly militant, 95 (19.1%) as militant, and 330 (66.4%) as non-militant.

It was initially hypothesized that the emergence of militancy was associated with age differentials among professors. More specifically, it was expected that militancy would be higher among younger faculty and lower among older professors. To the extent this proved true the development of militant professionalism in the occupation could be attributed to a "new wave" of faculty entering the profession. A relationship between age and militancy did, in fact, appear but not quite as anticipated. To summarize the finding, the median age of highly militant faculty was 38.5 years, of militant professors 41.0 years, and of non-militant instructors 45.1 years. Significant as these age differences may be they hardly demonstrate a generation gap between younger and older professors, and age can be viewed at best as only one factor affecting faculty militancy.

When academic rank is examined the relationship of age and militancy becomes somewhat clearer. As Table 1 shows Associate Professors are most markedly overrepresented among the highly militant faculty. As one would predict there is also an overrepresentation of Assistant Professors among the militant and an underrepresentation of Full Professors, but the more outstanding pattern is that of the Associate Professors. Militancy is thus less of a reaction of young, new faculty against the academic "system" than it is a reaction of persons intermediate in the academic heirarchy.

Academic discipline has long been a significant variable in affecting the perspectives and orientations of college teachers. Due to selective recruitment into the different fields, different patterns of socialization into the disciplines, and the inherent character of many of the fields, professors in the several academic areas often differ greatly on issues within academia. Militancy is no exception as Table 2 reveals. Militant professors are much more likely to be in one of the disciplines of the Humanities or Social Sciences than any other. When looked at from the broader standpoint of the liberal arts and the professional fields, the pattern is still quite marked. That is, when the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences are considered as a group it is found that of the highly militant 84.7% are in the liberal arts, of the militant 71.5%, while of the non-militant only 58.2% are in those disciplines.

Political orientation is still another variable one would expect to be related to faculty militancy. In the survey the respondents were asked to identify themselves in terms of their general political orientation and Table 3 indicates the relationship of these responses to militancy. A markedly higher proportion of those who are highly militant and militant view themselves as liberal or radical, while a much higher percentage of the non-militant see themselves as moderate or conservative.

The extent to which these differences are reflected in general educational orientation is much less than expected. Faculty views as to the main purpose of

higher education, and in terms of their own educational commitments, do not differ greatly between the militant and non-militant instructors. Orientation relative to research and teaching, however, does differ between the two groups. The highly militant faculty are more likely to indicate that their main interest is in research than the non-militant, but even at that the greatest majority of the highly militant instructors view themselves as primarily teachers. (See Table 4).

The fact that a somewhat higher proportion of the highly militant faculty see their main interest in research while their employment is within a system of colleges whose prime mission is teaching opens other areas for analysis. That is, it is possible that occupational militancy is more a product of professional dissatisfaction than structural or orientational factors.

On questions asking if the respondent would still become a professor were he to begin his career again no significant differences appeared between the militant and non-militant instructors. Similarly, when asked if they would choose the same disciplines were they to begin anew no differences developed between the groups. When asked, however, if they plan to remain in college teaching a larger proportion of the highly militant replied no (12.5% compared to 7.4% of the militant, and 4.2% of the non-militant). The militants also expressed a lower level of intent to remain at their present institution (52.8% of the highly militants planned to remain at their present college, 57.9% of the militants, and 65.8% of the non-militants).

Job and institutional dissatisfaction is sometimes affected by the extent of integration into the work organization. When these factors were pursued in the analysis it was found that the more highly militant professors are more likely to limit their social contacts to other members of their departments and to other members of the teaching faculty. In addition, the highly militant instructors report having close contacts with a smaller number of students than do the non-militants.

These differences are not definitive, but they do suggest that professorial militancy may be related to the depth of integration of the instructors into the institutions at which they teach. Another of the questions places a little more light on this issue. When asked if they would accept a position, at the same rank and salary, with the University of California, the highly militant professors indicated a greater willingness to make such a move. Of the highly militants 45.8% stated they would accept such a change, 44.2% of the militants stated the same reply, but of the non-militants only 35.2% indicated they would make such a move.

Dissatisfaction with the general state of teaching in American higher education was also higher among the highly militant professors. On one item the respondents were asked their agreement or disagreement with the statement that most teaching in modern colleges and universities was so bad that the majority of faculty ought to be sued for malpractice. Sixty-one percent of the highly militant faculty members agreed with the statement. Of the militant professors 43.5% agreed, and of the non-militants 44% endorsed the statement.

Various other factors could be explored in the effort to explain and understand the emergence of militancy among professors. In addition, more refined analysis is also in order to more precisely identify the relationships between militancy and the variables discussed in this paper. As time, resources, and energy permit I hope to accomplish these goals. Still, based upon the data certain tentative conclusions can be drawn which might prove of value for the development of future hypotheses.

1. Militant faculty are more likely to be in the disciplines associated with the Humanities and Social Sciences than in any of the other fields found in a college or university.
2. Militant professors are more likely to be those who view themselves as politically (and probably socially) liberal or radical.

3. Although militant faculty members do not differ significantly from other professors in their educational perspectives, they do have a tendency to be more research than teaching oriented and to be more interested in moving to an institution which will allow more opportunities for the expression of this interest.
4. The militant instructors tend to function socially within more narrow circles than do non-militant professors, and this appears both in their contacts with faculty and students.
5. Militant faculty are less satisfied with their careers, with their institutions, and with the general character of college teaching - than is true of non-militants.
6. The highly militant professors tend to be persons who have been in college teaching long enough to reach intermediate rank (Associate Professor), and are not as likely to be among the older or younger groups of professors.

The last point is interesting in that similar findings have come from studies of unionism among industrial engineers. Seidman, in a study of union support among a body of engineers, found that the highest levels of support came from middle-aged engineers who were beginning to sense a closure in terms of their career ambitions. That is, those who were most supportive of the union were persons who felt their early ambitions were becoming less likely of realization and whose mobility was becoming more restricted. To these people unionism represented a defensive mechanism.[4]

The data examined here suggests that a similar process may be at work among college teachers. Those faculty commited to their professorial careers, but unhappy with it for one or another reason, seem to be the persons most likely to be in the ranks of the highly militant. With the levelling of college enrollments, a tighter market for securing positions in academia, and increasing restrictions

upon the financial support for higher education, it is possible that the numbers of people in this type of position will increase. Given that possibility, the predictions of greater militancy and growing support for collective bargaining in colleges and universities seem quite valid.

A good deal more empirical research is necessary to adequately understand these movements which are taking hold in university and college faculties. It is also critical that work be done on the potential consequences of professorial militancy, in terms of the character of institutions of higher education, the nature of education itself, and the future of the profession. Hopefully the data discussed here will provide some benchmarks for such future research.

NOTES

1. For examples of such research see the works of Ronald Corwin, Stephen Cole, Joel Seidman, Archie Kleingartner, and Bernard Goldstein.

2. Four of these surveys are: Lane, Robert E., Faculty Unionism in a California State College, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Iowa, 1967; Haehn, James O., A Study of Trade Unionism Among State College Professors, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1969; Haehn, James O., A Survey of Faculty and Administrator Attitudes on Collective Bargaining, Los Angeles, Academic Senate of the Calif ornia State Colleges, 1970; and Devall, William B., Collective Bargaining and College Professors: A Sample Survey, ditto, Department of Sociology, Humboldt State College, 1971.

3. The relationships between faculty characteristics and support for unionization and collective bargaining were discussed in A Survey of Faculty and Administrator Attitudes Toward Collective Bargaining, op. cit.; Collective Bargaining in Higher Education, a paper presented to the California Educational Research Association, April, 1971; and in The Social Scientist in the California State Colleges, a paper presented to the Community College Social Science Association, October, 1971.

4. See: Seidman, Joel and Cain, Glen G., "Unionized Engineers and Chemists", Journal of Business, 37, July, 1964

TABLE 1

Academic Rank and Militancy
(percent)

Rank	Highly Militant	Militant	Non-Militant	Total
Professor	19.4 %	40.0 %	40.6 %	37.4 %
Associate Professor	40.3	23.2	24.8	26.8
Assistant Professor	38.9	31.6	30.0	31.6
Other	0	4.2	3.6	3.2
No answer	1.4	1.0	1.0	1.0
Total :	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N :	72	95	330	497

TABLE 2

Academic Discipline and Militancy
(percent)

Discipline	Highly Militant	Militant	Non-Militant	Total
Humanities	26.4 %	18.9 %	20.0 %	20.7 %
Social Sciences	44.4	33.7	19.1	25.6
Natural Sciences	12.5	18.9	19.1	18.1
Other:Liberal Arts	1.4	0	0	.2
Engineering	0	3.2	3.3	2.8
Education	6.9	7.4	12.1	10.5
Business	0	5.3	8.8	6.8
Other:Professional	8.3	12.6	17.0	14.9
No answer	0	0	.6	.4
Total :	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0
N :	72	95	330	497

TABLE 3

Political Orientation and Militancy
(percent)

Orientation	Highly Militant	Militant	Non-Militant	Total
Conservative	1.4 %	5.3 %	7.8 %	6.4 %
Moderate	6.9	29.5	47.6	38.2
Liberal	68.1	50.5	40.6	46.5
Radical	19.4	10.5	1.8	6.0
No answer	4.2	4.2	2.1	2.8
Total :	100.0	100.0	99.9	99.9
N :	72	95	330	497

TABLE 4

Main Interest and Militancy
(percent)

Main Interest	Highly Militant	Militant	Non-Militant	Total
Research	26.4 %	20.0 %	17.3 %	19.1 %
Teaching	70.8	80.0	80.6	79.1
No answer	2.8	0	2.1	1.8
Total :	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N :	72	95	330	497

TABLE 5

Social Contacts and Militancy
(percent)

Social contacts mainly:	Highly Militant	Militant	Non-Militant	Total
with members of the teaching faculty	79.2 %	67.4 %	56.7%	62.0 %
with members of your academic department	56.9	44.2	40.6	43.7
number of students with whom you have close contacts:				
15 or less	55.5	49.5	41.8	45.2
16 or more	43.0	48.4	57.6	53.7